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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8826  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA  
AMEMBASSY KIGALI  
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA  
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000461

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH JOSEPH KABILA

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM LACY SWING FOR REASONS  
1.5(B)(D)

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11. (C) SUMMARY:  
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AMBASSADOR SWING MET WITH PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE JOSEPH KABILA FOR AN HOUR LATE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 25 AT KABILA'S OAU VILLAGE OFFICE. THE AMBASSADOR PRESENTED KABILA WITH PRESIDENT BUSH'S MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE AND OFFERED HIS OWN VERBAL CONDOLENCES ON THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT LAURENT KABILA. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO GAVE KABILA THE INVITATION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST ON FEBRUARY 1; KABILA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATING AND PROMISED HIS ANSWER JANUARY 26. THE AMBASSADOR OUTLINED THE CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLYING THE EMBASSY'S DRAWDOWN. KABILA STRESSED THROUGHOUT THE TALK HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH THE WAR AND THE SUFFERING OF THE CONGOLESE PEOPLE; APPEALED FOR MONUC TO DEPLOY AND FOR RWANDAN AND UGANDAN TROOPS TO DEPART. KABILA GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING SEIZED WITH THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY HE HAS INHERITED, AND ACUTELY AWARE OF THE LEGITIMACY ISSUE POSED BY HIS SELECTION, WHICH SEEMS TO INCLINE HIM TOWARD A POLICY OF GREATER OPENNESS WITH REGARD TO THE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

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12. (C) A "PATRIOT WHO SYMBOLIZED OUR HOPES"  
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THE AMBASSADOR, UNACCOMPANIED, MET WITH JOSEPH KABILA FOR AN HOUR ON JANUARY 25. FOREIGN MINISTER OKITUNDU, PRESIDENT CABINET DIRECTOR GEORGES BUSE AND STATE SECURITY COUNCIL CHIEF NONO LUTULA WERE ALSO PRESENT.

THE AMBASSADOR BEGAN BY PRESENTING PRESIDENT BUSH'S CONDOLENCE MESSAGE TO KABILA, FOR WHICH KABILA EXPRESSED WARM APPRECIATION. IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S MESSAGE AND THE AMBASSADOR'S VERBAL CONDOLENCES, JOSEPH KABILA DESCRIBED HIS LATE FATHER AS A "PATRIOT WHO SYMBOLIZED THE CONGOLESE PEOPLE'S HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS WHICH WE MUST NOW SHOULDER." THIS WILL NOT BE EASY, HE SAID, BUT "WE ARE BOUND BY THE REALITIES WE FACE TO FIND SOLUTIONS."

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13. (C) KNITTING THE CONGO BACK INTO THE  
WORLD'S FABRIC  
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PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE KABILA EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF "MAKING CONTACTS" WITH A WORLD "THAT IS CHANGING FAST." IN THIS REGARD HE SAID THAT ALREADY SINCE HIS FATHER'S DEATH AND PARTICULARLY AT THE FUNERAL THIS WEEK, HE HAD SPOKEN WITH "MANY" FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES, EACH WITH A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT ON HOW BEST TO ADDRESS CONGO'S PROBLEMS. FOR HIMSELF, THE MOST ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IS TO FIND A WAY TO END THE WAR. THIS MEANS GETTING THE OCCUPYING ARMIES OUT OF THE DRC, AND IN THIS REGARD THE WORLD COMMUNITY, AND MOST ESPECIALLY THE U.S. AS ITS STRONGEST MEMBER, HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY. EARLY ELECTIONS, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO DEMOCRACY, ARE BEING DELAYED BECAUSE THE COUNTRY IS "OCCUPIED."

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14. (C) WAR'S FRUITS: "MAYHEM,  
DESTRUCTION AND REFUGEES"  
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THE DRC HAS NOW BEEN UNDER "OCCUPATION," HE CONTINUED, FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS. AS A RESULT, THERE HAS BEEN "MUCH MAYHEM -- DESTRUCTION, MURDER, AND THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS." THERE WERE NO CONGOLESE REFUGEES BEFORE THE WAR, HE ASSERTED, BUT TODAY CONGOLESE ARE FLEEING FROM BUNIA, FOR EXAMPLE, INTO UGANDA.

RWANDA AND UGANDA JUSTIFY THE PRESENCE OF THEIR ARMIES IN THE CONGO ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY MUST COMBAT THE SECURITY THREAT WHICH THE INTERAHAMWE POSES, KABILA SAID. THE INTERAHAMWE ARGUMENT CANNOT BE USED, HOWEVER, TO EXPLAIN WHY RWANDAN AND UGANDAN FORCES ARE SO DEEP INSIDE CONGOLESE TERRITORY, MORE THAN A THOUSAND KILOMETERS FROM THEIR BORDERS; NOR WILL THE INTERAHAMWE CLAIM ADEQUATELY JUSTIFY RWANDA'S AND UGANDA'S "RIPPING OFF" THE DRC'S NATURAL RESOURCES FOR WHICH, HE OBSERVED, A SPECIAL UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.

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15. (C) RAISING CONGO WAR'S PROFILE  
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THE WORLD SPEAKS ONLY OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE, BUT DOES NOT MENTION THAT 1.7 MILLION CONGOLESE ARE SAID TO HAVE DIED IN THE CONGO AS A RESULT OF THE CURRENT WAR. "LET'S NOT LET LAURENT KABILA DIE FOR NOTHING." RATHER, HE SAID, KABILA'S LIFE AND DEATH WERE A "PEACE OFFERING." HE URGED THE U.S TO LOOK AT THE CONGO "IN A WIDER CONTEXT OF THE GREAT LAKES SUB-REGION," WHICH, HE SAID, IS WHAT HIS LATE FATHER WAS DOING "LET JUSTICE BE DONE," HE SAID. FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, THE U.S. MUST TAKE ITS CONGO POLICY TO A "HIGHER LEVEL."

WHEN THEY MET, KABILA SAID HE HAD ASKED UN SRSG MORJANE WHERE THE UN TROOPS ARE. FROM LATTER'S RESPONSE, KABILA SAID, HE HAD THE SENSE THAT THEY ARE STILL A LONG WAYS OFF. KABILA APPEALED TO THE AMBASSADOR FOR THE U.S. TO PUT "PRESSURE" ON RWANDA, UGANDA AND BURUNDI TO WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS FROM THE DRC. THEY SHOULD BE CONFRONTED AS TO WHY THEIR TROOPS ARE IN THE CONGO, THEN TOLD THAT EITHER THEY LEAVE, OR RISK INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS.

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16. (C) POSSIBLE PRAYER BREAKFAST  
PARTICIPATION  
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PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE KABILA EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL INVITATION TO THE ANNUAL NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST ON FEBRUARY 1. HE AGREED THAT THIS REPRESENTS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY, TOO GOOD TO BE PASSED UP. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE POINTED OUT THAT HIS PRIMARY CONCERN AT THE MOMENT IS FOR THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THE CONGO. THEREFORE, HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES; HE SAID THEY WOULD NEED TWELVE HOURS IN ORDER "TO STUDY" THE INVITATION. HE ASKED FOR FURTHER DETAILS ON THE PROGRAM AND A LIST OF THE OTHER FOREIGN HEADS OF STATE INVITED.

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17. (C) EMBASSY DRAWDOWN PRECAUTIONARY  
AND TEMPORARY  
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THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO CLARIFY THE CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLYING THE EMBASSY'S CURRENT DRAWDOWN OF ITS PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT. HE DESCRIBED THE DRAWDOWN AS A "PRECAUTIONARY, PRUDENT" MEASURE. THE DRAWDOWN IS TEMPORARY, NOT PERMANENT, AND IS NOT AN EVACUATION. THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT THIS ACTION DOES NOT IN ANY WAY REFLECT ANY LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS HANDLED THE AFFAIRS OF STATE SINCE KABILA'S DEATH; IN FACT, HE SAID, HE AND THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY GENERALLY HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THEIR SMOOTH HANDLING OF THE TRANSITION.

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18. (C) COMMENT:  
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ON THE EVE OF HIS OFFICIAL INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT AND SUCCESSOR TO HIS SLAIN FATHER, JOSEPH KABILA, WHOM THE AMBASSADOR HAD LAST SEEN IN NOVEMBER, MADE THE IMPRESSION OF ONE WHO SENSES THAT, INEXORABLY, THE COMPLEX BURDENS OF THIS VAST, BELEAGUERED COUNTRY ARE COMING TO REST ON HIS SHOULDERS. VARIOUS INTERESTS WITHIN THE DISPARATE, INTERNALLY-COMPETING AND OFTEN CONTRADICTORY POWER STRUCTURE ARE ALREADY VYING FOR HIS TIME AND ATTENTION AS THEY SEEK AT LEAST TO RETAIN, AND TO INCREASE IF POSSIBLE WHATEVER INFLUENCE THEY MAY HAVE HAD WITH HIS FATHER -- HENCE, THE THREE SENIOR PARTICIPANTS AT THE MEETING, FOR EXAMPLE. THIS PERHAPS ALSO EXPLAINS JOSEPH KABILA'S INSISTENCE ON USING ENGLISH THROUGH MOST OF THE CONVERSATION (A LANGUAGE IN WHICH NONE OF THE OTHER THREE PARTICIPANTS IS VERSED), ALTHOUGH HIS FRENCH IS FLUENT.

ALTHOUGH AT FIRST IMPRESSION SHY, THE PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE IS SOFT-SPOKEN, BUT SELF-ASSURED AND ARTICULATE. HE PROJECTS THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE AN APPEALING, PROFESSIONAL IMAGE FOR HIS COUNTRY. HIS ACUTE AWARENESS OF THE LEGITIMACY ISSUE AND HIS OWN LIMITED EXPERIENCE MAY WELL INCLINE HIM TO REACH OUT AND OPEN UP THE POLITICAL PROCESS, SET A REASONABLE DATE FOR ELECTIONS, EVEN THOUGH MAKING THESE CONTINGENT UPON ALL OF THE BELLIGERENTS AND THE "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S" SUCCESSFULLY SUING FOR PEACE AND A WITHDRAWAL OF RWANDAN AND UGANDAN FORCES.

KABILA IMMEDIATELY GRASPED THE IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY WHICH THE PRAYER BREAKFAST INVITATION REPRESENTS FOR THE DRC. HE IS AGONIZING, HOWEVER, OVER THE DILEMMA OF SQUARING THIS TRIP, LESS THAN A WEEK AFTER HIS INAUGURATION, WITH HIS TOP IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE OF MAINTAINING STABILITY AND CALM IN THE WAKE OF FATHER LAURENT KABILA'S ASSASSINATION.

SWING